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TAGS: [PGOV IN ASEC](#)

SUBJECT: MORE VIOLENCE INVOLVING NORTH INDIANS IN MAHARASHTRA

REF: A. 08 MUMBAI 505 AND 513

[1](#)B. 08 KOLKATA 299

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Two north Indian youth were killed in Maharashtra over the past two days in unrelated incidents. Police are concerned about public safety during the November 4 north Indian festival in Mumbai. End Summary

[1](#)2. (U) Mumbai police killed Rahul Raj, a youth from Bihar, on October 27. Raj boarded a double-decker bus at peak commuter hour, allegedly took passengers on the upper deck hostage, and threw the upper-deck conductor out of the moving bus. Raj fired several rounds from an unlicensed revolver, wounding one passenger seriously. Raj reportedly threw a scribbled message from the bus which said that he wanted to talk to the Mumbai Police Commissioner and to the media. His message further said that he did not want to harm anyone else, but wanted to kill Raj Thackeray, leader of the Marathi chauvinist Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). (See reftels for the violence sparked in Maharashtra by the MNS' beating of Bihari youth who had come for a railway exam.) The bus driver alerted a local police station, and halted the bus. Police surrounded the bus, asked Raj to surrender, but shot and killed him when he refused to come out or surrender his revolver.

[1](#)3. (U). Both Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Indian Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav (who is also from Bihar), though bitter rivals in state politics, accused Mumbai police of being trigger-happy, of not trying hard enough to disarm Raj to arrest him alive. R.R. Patil, Maharashtra Home Minister from the Nationalist Congress Party, initially defended Mumbai police. However, after sustained pressure from the Government of India, on October 28, the Government of Maharashtra ordered an enquiry into the killing of Raj, which will be headed by Maharashtra Chief Secretary Johnny Joseph. The state CID (Criminal Investigation Department) would also probe the death.

[1](#)4. (U) In an unrelated incident, Marathi speaking men allegedly beat to death Dharmadev Rai of Uttar Pradesh, on a commuter train, on October 28. Rai and three of his co-workers from a manufacturing plant were on their way to a long-haul train terminus to board a train to go home for the Diwali holidays. Railway police have registered a complaint against unknown assailants, but have not arrested any one as yet. This incident has drawn extensive coverage in the national news.

[1](#)5. (U) Comment: Next week, on November 4, thousand of north Indian migrants in Mumbai celebrate their religious festival

"Chhat Puja" on Mumbai's beaches. Last year, Mumbai-based leaders of the migrants, as well as Thackeray, both made "Chhat Puja" an occasion for rancorous public debate on in-migration to Mumbai. In view of the recent spate of anti-migrant violence and the latest killings, Mumbai police will remain on high alert until the Chhat passes peacefully this year round. Earlier in the year, Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav said that he would attend "Chhat Puja" in Mumbai this year. Given the war of words going on between Lalu and Thackeray, Mumbai police have requested Lalu not to attend. If Lalu fails to attend, his supporters could accuse him of being scared of Thackeray, a charge the highly visible politician would shun. But if Lalu attends the celebration, another round of North-Indian bashing by MNS could well be set off. Sources have told post RSO that the north Indians want to hold the puja in Shivaji Park, near where MNS leader Raj Thackeray lives. A similar type event in February by the Samajwadi Party at Shivaji Park served as the spring board for Raj's anti-north Indian campaign. At the time MNS could only cause disruptions in limited parts of Mumbai, but MNS showed last week that they could deploy significant numbers and cause problems despite the best efforts of the police. The police advise post they will deploy significant numbers of personnel to prevent any problems, but MNS might still try to exploit the event. The police may decide not to allow the puja to take place at Shivaji Park. End Comment.

FOLMSBEE